

## MACAULAY'S THIRD CHAPTER

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were estimated at  $\hat{665,000}$  for 1685, had risen by 1701 to about  $\hat{900,000}$  a year. This alteration for the worse in the position of the labourer was partly due to the war with France, which increased taxation and greatly damaged trade. There was also a series of bad harvests during the reign of William III. Macaulay mentions the distress caused by the failure of the harvest of 1692, but seems unaware that there were seven years of scarcity and high prices, which extended from 1692 to 1698. \* Of these years/ says Thorold Rogers, ' the worst was 1693-4, and the next 1697-8.'

Macaulay, it is clear, had not devoted much attention to agriculture, and it is not given an adequate place in his account of the life of the nation. He begins by saying, in chapter iii, that \* agriculture was in what would now be considered as a very rude and imperfect state<sup>J</sup> ; and adds that half the area of England was moor, forest, and fen, farming was unskilful, the average annual yield of all kinds of grain not more than ten million quarters, the rotation of crops imperfectly understood, and the sheep and oxen of that time diminutive. All this is true, but the comparison of agriculture under Charles II with nineteenth-century agriculture produces too unfavourable an impression ; backward though it was, English

agriculture was  
not stationary but progressive ; the  
experiments which  
Worlidge and other writers on husbandry  
suggested were  
beginning to be tried in various parts of the  
country, and  
gradually the way was being prepared for the  
rapid and  
general improvement which took place during  
the eight-  
eenth century.<sup>2</sup> One sign of the progress of  
agriculture

<sup>1</sup> History of Agriculture and Prices in England (1887), v.  
240.

<sup>2</sup> R. E. Prothero, English Farming (1917), p, 130 ; W.  
Cunningham,  
Growth of English Industry and Commerce in Modern Times  
(1919), i. 545-6.